

The Barnardo's Safe Accommodation Project: Consultation with young people

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Thank you to Ania, Darrell, Hannah, Kelly, Mai, Marsha, Natalie, Ola, and Rihanna (not their real names) for meeting me, and sharing your experiences and perspectives. Your honesty helped me better understand what it is like to live in foster care.

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Introduction

In 2011 Barnardo's received DfE grant funding for a two-year pilot project to deliver specialist foster care for sexually exploited /trafficked young people.

The University of Bedfordshire is undertaking an evaluation of the Safe Accommodation Project, which includes consulting with young people in the care system who have been affected by sexual exploitation or trafficking. This was a small-scale consultation that aimed to answer the following questions.

1. What do these young people identify as the most important things that affect a care placement for better or worse?
2. What are their experiences of, and reflections on, carers trying to keep them safe?
3. What messages would they want shared with carers to help them offer better support to young people who are at risk of, or in, exploitative relationships?

The findings will be used by Barnardo's to improve their support and care of young people within the Safe Accommodation Project.

Methodology

I used semi-structured interviews to ask nine young people about what it was like to live in foster care. The interviews lasted between 20-45 minutes and each interviewee was given a £10 voucher and a certificate to recognise their contribution to the Safe Accommodation Project.

All of the participants were contacted through projects that work with young people at risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking, and gave their informed consent to take part. Their names have been changed in this report so that they cannot be identified. The consultation methodology was approved by the University of Bedfordshire and Barnardo's ethics committees.

All of the young people were aged between 12 and 17.¹ Six of the young people were British, two were Eastern European and one was from East Asia. Eight were girls and one was a boy. Eight were White, and one was Black British.

This is a report on the experiences and perspectives of a very small group of young people, so the findings should not be generalised to all young people in foster care who are at risk of, or affected by, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Only one young person had been affected by trafficking, so the report focuses heavily on the experiences of those in contact with sexual exploitation projects.² The findings represent a snapshot of these young people's feelings at a moment in time, which in some cases was quite critical. However the intention of this research is not to criticise, but to improve care through understanding the experiences of young people, and to recognise the crucial role of carers in young people's lives. I hope that foster carers will find it useful as they explore the needs of young people affected by these issues.

¹ Ania-13; Darrell-16, Hannah-14; Kelly-16; Mai-17; Marsha-16; Natalie-15; Ola-12; and Rihanna-17

² For further information see 'On the Safe Side' (ECPAT, 2011) for some principles for the safe accommodation for trafficked young people.

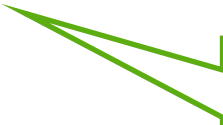
What did I learn? Summary of key themes

- Relationships with their family and friends were very important to these young people - even more so when they could not see or talk to them easily. As a result they appreciated carers recognising and valuing these relationships, and helping them find ways to stay in touch.
- This group did not necessarily have the same understanding of risk as their carers and social workers, nor think about their own safety in the same way. However, their understanding of risk and safety did develop positively as they were supported.
- There are good reasons someone goes missing, and these young people want carers to be interested in what those reasons are. Even if they give the impression that they are independent, don't want you to interfere and don't trust you - it doesn't mean young people don't need you. Although they complained about rules and boundaries, they thought these were better than carers being indifferent to their safety and needs, especially when they returned home.
- Like many young people, they described a growing need for independence, which may, at times, have been satisfied through experiences that others would see as 'risky'. As a result they often experienced boundaries as being controlling. Where young people have experienced heavy exploitation, carers therefore need to look for ways to recognise the value of their independence, and give them chances to exercise choice.
- This group of young people appreciated adults who took time to build their trust, who didn't judge them or their relationships, and who tried to understand or remember what it was like to be a teenager.
- All of the young people felt nervous, scared and emotional when they first arrived to a care placement, regardless of whether or not they showed it. They felt welcomed when carers took the time to find out about them, and made sure they had everything they needed.
- It was important to these young people to feel that you were "one of the family". They liked being taken out for meals and trips with the rest of the family, carers showing concern about where they were if they were out, and being talked to with respect.
- *For these young people, food was a sign of care, inclusion and feeling 'at home', and could either make them feel that they were welcome, or that they were intruders in a new home.*
- Many aspects of these young people's lives had changed for the better while they had been in care. This included going to school/college, becoming more confident, learning new skills, and learning how to keep themselves safe.
- The young people's advice to carers was to listen to them, not judge them and to give them space.

Family and Friends


Relationships with their family and friends were very important to these young people - even more so when they could not see or talk to them easily. As a result they appreciated carers recognising and valuing these relationships, and helping them find ways to stay in touch.

The young people I interviewed were all in care because they could not live with their birth families, and so, understandably, they talked about their family and friends a lot. When they felt low, it was often because they could not see or speak to their parents, siblings or friends. And when things improved it seemed to be because they were allowed to see and contact them.



As time went on and I got to know people, I got happier and happier and happier. And then as soon as social services said I could go home once a week to see my family and that Dylan could have contact, I got really happy! (**Kelly**)

To **Darrell**, being placed far away felt like a punishment.




I was out of county... I did nowt wrong to be put up there. They put me there straight away. They knew it were affecting me and all my friends 'cause I were saying it in all the LAC reviews and they didn't do nowt. They said they'd arrange it, but then they'd have to go do the checks, police checks on me mates and me mates' Mums and Dads, which just took loads of time, and most of the time I just fell out with me mates because of what they were doing.

This had a lasting impact on Darrell's relationships. When I asked whether there was anything good about being in care, he mentioned "new scenes", and told me: "I don't get too comfy in a certain area in case I have to move – it doesn't bother me anymore".

Rihanna had been placed a long way from home because she was going missing so often, and putting herself at risk when she did so. But within a few hours of arriving she ran away and hitchhiked to see her boyfriend and best friend. She told me that she would have run away less if she had been allowed to phone her Mum and her friends.

On the whole these young people expressed a strong sense of loyalty to their families. When carers were positive about their birth families, it was noticed and appreciated by the young people. But the opposite was also true. **Natalie** felt that her carer was "twisting" her sister's mind against her Mum, which made her very angry.



I love my mum. I proper miss her now. Now I'm allowed to go and see my mum, but it took three or four months for that to happen.

Safety

This group did not necessarily have the same understanding of risk as their carers and social workers, nor think about their own safety in the same way. However, their understanding of risk and safety did develop positively as they were supported.

Safety was not something that came up much in our conversations. When I asked about it, some young people told me that, although *they* thought they were safe, their carers and social workers didn't agree.

I asked **Ania** if she and her foster carer had the same ideas about what was safe for her to do.

(Laughing) No! I think she's worried that I can hang around with boys probably. That's what she's worried about.

Marsha was frustrated and bemused by the response when she went missing

It's like they say you can go somewhere but you have to be back at a certain time and that time will be stupid. Stupid! And I wouldn't come back at that time and before you know it the police start looking for you. It's like it doesn't make sense...yeah. And then I think you're basically wasting police time out looking for me, and I'm perfectly fine. Obviously I understand that they think something could happen to me but most of the time I'm fine.

But she also described how her attitude to her own safety had changed, and the role that her support worker had played.

I'm grown up more...When you're running around like a little street rat you're not getting anywhere are you? School wasn't going well and stuff and you just have to sit down and go "What do I need to do?" And then I met Louise and me and Louise would talk and stuff".

Natalie was also very positive about the support she had received from the project she was involved in, and this had helped her look back and see things differently.

At first when mum smashed me phones up I thought she used to hate me but now I actually understand why she did it. It's like safety innit? I was rebelling against everything. It was too much, but I couldn't cope.

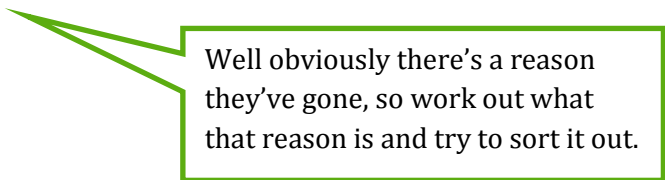
Going Missing

There are good reasons someone goes missing, and these young people want carers to be interested in what those reasons are. Even if they give the impression that they are independent, don't want you to interfere and don't trust you – it doesn't mean young people don't need you. Although they complained about rules and boundaries, they thought these were better than carers being indifferent to their safety and needs, especially when they returned home.

Seven of the nine young people I spoke to had experience of going missing from their care placements. While they all had different reasons for going, they shared similar experiences of coming back and how important their carer's reactions were, when they returned.

Rihanna once returned to her foster placement after four days "on the run". She was very hungry and thirsty but remembers her foster carer giving her "dirty looks" and ignoring her. She said that being ignored made her think "Well screw you then!"

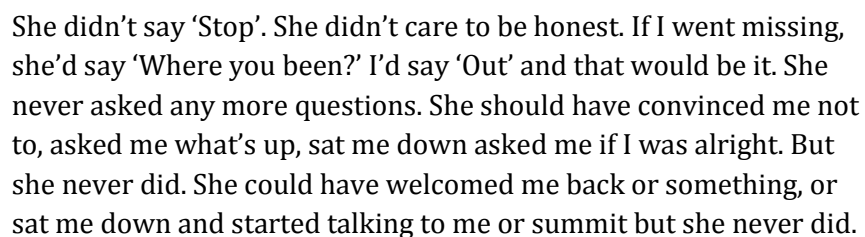
I asked "What would you say to foster carers when a young person goes missing?"



Well obviously there's a reason they've gone, so work out what that reason is and try to sort it out.

Rihanna didn't tell me what her reasons were, but she was absolutely certain that if anyone had tried to "lock" her in, things would have been even worse. She said she would "always find a way" to get back to where she was from.


After an argument with her foster carer, **Natalie** said she would leave. Her carer provided a bag, watched her pack her things and shut the door behind her.



She didn't say 'Stop'. She didn't care to be honest. If I went missing, she'd say 'Where you been?' I'd say 'Out' and that would be it. She never asked any more questions. She should have convinced me not to, asked me what's up, sat me down asked me if I was alright. But she never did. She could have welcomed me back or something, or sat me down and started talking to me or summit but she never did.


Both indifference and judgement made the young people feel uncared for. When a carer showed concern, it made a real difference, even if the young person continued to go missing. **Hannah** told me that when she came back after going missing the staff in the residential unit "ask if you're alright and everything and then you talk to someone and the police come and look at ya and see if you're alright and that".

I wondered what that was like for her, and she replied:



It feels like they're looking out for me and that.

Marsha complained about “everyone” calling her when she stayed out at night – the carer, social services and the police. But when I asked her “What’s the worst thing a carer could do if a young person goes missing” she replied:



Don't care really. The whole calling you up situation is kinda showing they care. If you don't really do anything then you don't care. That person will go out and do it even more, because you don't care! Yeah!

Rules and Independence

Like many young people, they described a growing need for independence, which may, at times, have been satisfied through experiences that others would see as 'risky'. As a result they often experienced boundaries as being controlling. Where young people have experienced heavy exploitation, carers therefore need to look for ways to recognise the value of their independence, and give them chances to exercise choice.

My interviewees were in transition between childhood and adulthood and their desire for independence was sometimes frustrated by the boundaries around curfews, phones and friends that their carers laid down.

I don't like the rules...I don't like it when someone is making rules about me. I want to live my own life, do what I want to. (**Ania**)

Most had experienced familiar sanctions (docked pocket money, friends not allowed over, loss of TV rights), but not all were effective. **Rihanna** was only allowed to spend money when accompanied by a member of staff from her residential unit. Because older men were constantly buying her drinks and giving her money anyway, this did not prevent her from going missing. To Rihanna these rules felt "petty", and she told her foster carer "If I didn't listen to my Mum, why would I listen to you?"

Rihanna explained that she had socialised with older women since she was 13, and didn't like being treated like a child (having to ask permission to take food and not being able to watch TV). Like Rihanna, those affected by sexual exploitation or trafficking may have experienced greater independence than other young people. They may then resist attempts to restrict their freedom - believing that they are able to look after themselves.

For example, **Marsha** was dismissive of her foster carer's rules, but understood that this was partly because she was just not used to having to stay at home.

And she had rules, and they were ridiculous (*in a high pitched voice*) "She has to be back by 8.30 p.m." and I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend. She would say "My children had these rules and they grew up to be..." whatever it was..."and you should do this", da da da. I was just sitting there. 'Cause I come from somewhere where I could just like to just walk out, and do what I want. And I came to this whole load of rules and I was just like, wow...yeah

Ola had also experienced a high degree of freedom when she lived with her mother, staying out very late when she was very young. She told me:

Now I'm surprised that I was going out at this time and I didn't come home for 10 hours. So right now it is different. Right now I have to be home at 6 but when I was 11 and a half I was going out at 6!

For trafficked young people there may also be cultural differences in understanding childhood and adulthood that are important for carers to be aware of. A young person who is expecting to come to the UK to work and pay back money that is owed by their family might prioritise this over their own right to protection and care as a child. For example **Mai**, described how a mother might “borrow a lot of money for her children come here...”

...If not give back, family have big problem. Yeah people can kill them or do something. So that's why they very scared when social service want see them .

Mai had been trafficked into the UK, and experienced strict boundaries for her own protection when she came into foster care. These were relaxed as the weeks and months progressed, but when I asked Mai how she felt about the rules when she first arrived, she replied:

I feel very angry. I feel very sad. And I feel I been in prison, you know, prison? Because not allowed for go out, not allowed mobile phone. Not talk to friends a lot, not see friend. I feel I been in prison.

Although boundaries and curfews could create conflict, and strong emotions like those described by Mai, their absence was interpreted as indifference. When **Natalie's** foster carer told her to be back at 9.30 pm and she was, her carer had sometimes gone to bed, or did not seem to notice Natalie's efforts. In contrast **Marsha** told me that the first time she got back early in the morning after going missing her current foster carer “was really *upset*”. She even made Marsha go to school that morning, which Marsha was not expecting, and recalled with laughter.

In my head I was thinking I would get to sleep, and I came home and she said “You know you're going school? I was like - !! And I had to go back out again and I was tired, yeah!

Most of the young people did recognise why rules were important, and some were able to look back at how they had made a positive difference in their lives. **Ola** told me that it was coming into foster care and her evening curfew that meant she was now attending school regularly. **Natalie** could tell with hindsight that her Mum had only monitored her Facebook account and phone, and taken away her TV because she was worried about her.

It's like at the time as well I couldn't see myself being groomed. At the time I thought it was quite a laughing matter, you look back and think you weren't as hard as you think.

Relationships, Sex and Sexual Exploitation

This group of young people appreciated adults who took time to build their trust, who didn't judge them or their relationships, and who tried to understand or remember what it was like to be a teenager.

We didn't talk about sexual exploitation in these conversations. But some young people did talk about their relationships, sex, and how foster carers responded to this. They spoke of the need for foster carers to be understanding, to show empathy, and - crucially - not to judge them.

Natalie told me that she had been compared to her foster carer's daughter on the basis of how many boyfriends they had both had. She told me she had replied:

Just 'cause of all the stuff that's happened, don't mean I've had more boyfriends. I don't call 'em boyfriends.

Rihanna's foster carer would say of Rihanna's boyfriends "They're only using and abusing you". Her response was "You don't know me at all! Don't pretend you know about me and them". She reflected that she probably would have been more open about things if her carers had just wanted to talk, instead of telling her their opinions about her relationships.

Ola was 12, and resisted her foster carer's attempts to tell her that certain boys were not safe to be with. She wanted her to understand that she was "growing up, and that's it". But Ola contrasted her carer with a support worker Jenny, who she felt she could speak to.

And Jenny, when she dropped me from school, she was talking about boys, why boys are like this and why boys are like this. And I understood her because she was telling the truth.

Marsha had lived with two families where she felt judged, in different ways. In the first, it seemed to her that everything was fine until she started going missing: "When I first got there they were all nice nice nice yeah, and then when they realised my habit (*staying out late*) it's like they just went evil". She then remembered the second carer reacting negatively to disclosures about her sexual experience.

First of all she didn't like the fact that I wasn't a virgin. She was *not* happy with that. Definitely not happy with that! My social worker said, "And she's sexually active..." (*Acting as her carer with a disgusted face*) "How old is she again?" (*Laughs*) She was like, "14". She said "Oh my God!" She wasn't happy about that. She didn't want me to do anything! I was thinking obviously me doing stuff at that age, that young was not great but it's done now.

In contrast Marsha's current carer talked to her frankly and openly about sex and relationships. Marsha explained that: "If we talk about sex she won't go 'Now the women and the man' (*she mimes a sex talk to a child and we laugh*). It's like "Marsha, did you have sex?' It's normal, it's...yeah. She tells me right from wrong."

Arriving to a New Care Placement

All of the young people felt nervous, scared and emotional when they first arrived to a care placement, regardless of whether or not they showed it. They felt welcomed when carers took the time to find out about them, and made sure they had everything they needed.

Every single one of the young people I spoke to described feeling 'nervous' emotional' 'or scared' when they came to a new care placement. They would stay quiet at first, and often cry. Sometimes they were moved quickly, and didn't know where they were going or their new foster carer's names until they arrived. **Ania** said she cried for two days when she first arrived at her foster home because she "didn't know these people". And **Marsha** told me that "you don't know how they're gonna be, 'cause it's a whole new house and new family. And I kinda felt like I was intruding in their home".

I asked **Kelly** how she felt when she first arrived

Sad. I were dragged away from all me family, me friends. I didn't know anyone, didn't have anyone to turn to here, so that's why I was sad. I didn't even know this place existed!

I know they're foster carers, but at first I felt so weird. I came into a stranger's house. I remember getting out of the car and Linda's mum was here and she said "Hiya love" and I were right shy. And I saw Linda and she said "Hiya" and then I went into house and Mark were there and it were so scary. The whole idea of being in care. It were so scary. Not knowing anybody. I was scared of being left.

But foster carers seemed to have been able to make them feel welcome in very similar ways.

She showed me my room, said it was painted for you. She showed me where's the toilet and everything and there was dinner, we went downstairs and we was talking and it was ok. **(Ola)**

She came to my room and told me I didn't need to cry. She asked me if I wanted something to eat, if I wanted something, if I was alright. **(Ania)**

She said me "What you want to eat for dinner?" And take some clothes for me and go upstairs and make bedding, and cooking, and talk with me...yeah. **(Mai)**


When I came here I had hardly any clothes, 'cause the place before was dodgy so most of me clothes were too small. So as soon as I came here they were in me wardrobe, finding out what I have and didn't have. Straight away, they decorated my room, which I'd never had and I were able to make it mine. So I just felt at home. **(Darrell)**

They did make me feel welcome. They used to pull puffy over to me and like tell me to put me feet up. They'd have Dylan over night for a few weeks until I got back to normal and then, dunno, they've just been good, they've been excellent. **(Kelly)**

Signs of Care


It was important to these young people to feel that you were “one of the family”. They liked being taken out for meals and trips with the rest of the family, carers showing concern about where they were if they were out, and being talked to with respect.

Ola knew her foster mum cared for her because “When I’m outside she’s calling me every single five minutes, where I am and everything. And she keeps nice food!” **Ania** felt the same: “When I’m somewhere or something she’s calling me, she’s checking that if I’m alright. I think she just care about me ‘cause she’s worried about where I am and what I’m doing”. **Kelly** told me that her foster carer “appreciates everything I do. Like, I load and unload dishwasher, put loads on. She’s always saying thank you to me all the time”. Kelly had also been ‘glamping’ with her foster family, which she had really enjoyed.




We had some good times. Me Mam and Dad never took me anywhere like that. So when I come ‘ere, it were quite good. I were so excited. It were like Christmas!

Other positive memories of placements included celebrating birthdays, and occasionally going out to restaurants to eat. For **Mai** this was a new experience.



When my birthday, I never do that. But she take me and baby go there to a restaurant and celebrating and eating and drinking and sing Happy Birthday to me.



Was this the first time you’ve celebrated your birthday?



Yes. Very good!

For many of them, being treated as ‘one of the family’, was important and they were sensitive to the ways this did or didn’t happen. For example **Rihanna** told me she wasn’t asked if she wanted to go to her foster sister’s graduation, but was dropped off at a cousin’s house early in the morning instead.

A number of others had felt included in family life though, and were really positive about foster care as a result.

If we go out she’s like, ‘This is my daughter - she’s like me!’ Yeah, that’s what she does! And I’m all part of the family and stuff, doing stuff together, just a mother/daughter situation really. (**Marsha**)

She treats me like I’m her own or something, she puts herself out. (**Natalie**)

I think of them as my own family now. I couldn’t have wished for a better foster family if I’m honest. They’re absolutely excellent; they just seem to be on my wavelength. (**Kelly**).

Food

For these young people, food was a sign of care, inclusion and feeling 'at home', and could either make them feel that they were welcome, or that they were intruders in a new home.

In these young people's experience, food was a sign of the quality of care they were receiving.

In **Mai's** previous placement she and her carer had eaten separately: "I buy food for me and her buy food for her. And I cook food for me, and her cook food for her. Not together, I just feel I don't like it". So sharing food and being cooked for was a sign of care and attention in her current placement

When I come here first time, I think for lunch and I feel hungry. And Ruth make me sandwich, and I very surprised, 'cause I live with Helen, Helen never do that for me. But when I come here Ruth make me sandwich and I feel very happy. And I feel her very good people. I feel very close you know?

Eating habits also became symptomatic of the health of the relationship between the carer and the young person. **Marsha** used to eat and talk with her foster carers. But she began to go missing and felt their disapproval quite strongly.

Then after I didn't feel part of it anymore. Dunno. It just felt weird after a while. I would be in my room a lot, and never come out. And when I come out I used to just eat toast.

Marsha said this led to her feeling isolated and that she didn't want to go to the kitchen or living room, unless no one was else was in the house.

In **Rihanna's** foster placement there were locks on the cupboards and, despite being very thin, she could only access food by asking her carers. This made her feel as if the home was a prison. She stayed out a lot, and so they began to give her money for food rather than cook for her. She interpreted this as indifference, and felt it was more a hotel than a home.

Ola felt embarrassed asking for her Polish food, but her carer perceived this and bought it for her, which was a relief for Ola

At Barbara's we were in the shops - she asked me if I want Polish food, or this food or this food. But right now I'm with Sharon. She just takes Polish food and she cooks it, so she knows how it was like... 'cause sometimes you feel stupid saying to your foster carer 'I want Polish food and you have to do it for me'

How Care has Helped

Many aspects of these young people's lives had changed for the better while they had been in care. This included going to school/college, becoming more confident, learning new skills, and learning how to keep themselves safe.

Despite some of their negative experiences, nearly all of the young people I interviewed told me about things that had improved in their life because of their time in care. They included:

- Ola and Ania regularly attending school for the first time
- Marsha growing in confidence and, starting a new hobby
- Mai learning English and how to look after a baby
- Darrell being supported to get a book published and developing his rapping
- Natalie learning the value of money – “It don’t grow on trees either. I used to thought it did and everything”
- Kelly having help to look after her baby and applying to go to college

Marsha and her support worker reeled off a long list of things that had changed while she was at her current foster placement.

I got through school in one piece, that’s one. I got into college. I picked a college far away from people I didn’t like so that I couldn’t...yeah. I don’t go out as much as I used to, and if I do I say where I’m going and stuff like that. Yeah. I take precautions with my sex life and stuff.

Do you remember with CAMHS and stuff you didn’t want to talk to them at all, but you’ve talked to them loads – that’s been a consistent change.

That’s a new thing... yeah that’s just crazy. I talk to bare people!*

* ‘Bare’ is slang for ‘lots of/many’

Advice to Carers

The young people's advice to carers was to listen to them, not judge them and to give them space.

I ended my interviews by asking each of the young people what advice they would give to foster carers who are about to start caring for a young person affected by sexual exploitation or trafficking. Here were their responses.

You have to wait. You have to wait for them to come and see you. You can't just be like "Are you having sex?" (*Pulling a funny face*). You have to wait until they feel comfortable enough to say, "I'm meeting this boy..." Stuff like that. **(Marsha)**.

Listen (*Interrupts before I finish asking the question*). That's all they ask for, is just to listen. **(Darrell)**

Give 'em space, and if they fink that something's going on, let the foster daughter/son talk to 'em when they want to. Don't pressurise 'em. Do it at their own speed. **(Kelly)**

Show them that you're there for them, by listening if they want to speak. If someone says 'Don't do this' then it makes you want to do it more to prove them wrong. So work *with* them, not against them. **(Rihanna)**.

Well I wouldn't be like controlling against them and nagging at them and asking 'Where you been?' as soon as they come back. I'd leave it, not to the point where it gets too much for 'em. Just leave it a day or two and let them calm down and just take them in a room and ask them if they're alright. 'Cause like, that normally works with me....It's like basic sort of stuff **(Natalie)**.

Be not too strict but like, sound. Like a class Mum or Dad. Like, lets me do stuff, but not bad stuff. **(Hannah)**

I go through a phase when I don't feel like talking, and you have to understand that that happens and you just have to live with it. Obviously whatever they've been through they might have different ways of dealing with it, so you have to deal with it. Giving you your own space. Don't be in their face. Like if you're in your room don't be like 'Come downstairs and watch TV with me!' **(Marsha)**

They need to understand, for example, that kids they need to go out, they need to, uh...for example, be on Facebook, they need to go, after school with their friends because everyone does that. Because they does that so I want to do that as well. **(Ola)**

Some people are very sad and I very sad for them - yeah. And I think foster carer need understand and need help them feel like family or something. Because they far, they no near, they haven't got anybody for they family. They never feel live like family. So I just think foster carer need do everything together and live, close with them. **(Mai)**

You can tell your foster carers that's one thing a kid loves is food. **(Darrell)**

Appendix: Interview schedule

The interviews were semi-structured, so a variety of tools and questions were used in different formats depending on how each interview progressed.

1. Understanding the young person's care history

Use Care History Chart to ask the young person about where they were living five years ago, and everywhere they have lived since. Record placements, length, and ask the following questions to understand transitions and experiences.

- What was the best place you've lived since you were in care? – Why was that?
- What was the worst place you've lived since you were in care? – Why was that?

2. Understanding specific placements in more depth

Respond to young person's accounts of their care history with relevant follow-up questions, which might include:

- What was it like when you first came into this placement? What can you remember about your first day/first few days? How did you feel at the start?
- Can you think of any things that have made you feel your foster parent really cares about you?
- Any things they've done/said that have made you feel like they haven't cared?
- How/why did the placement end?

3. Where they are now – carer score card

Use the carer score card and stickers to score different aspects of care, and ask the following after every question

- Why did you put the sticker there?
- Has it ever been lower? Why was that?
- Has it ever been higher? Why was that?
- What would have to change to move it up?

4. Specific aspects of foster care

As young people talk about these aspects of foster care, ask any of the following when relevant

Going missing

- How/why did you leave the house/unit?
- (How) did carers try and stop you?
- How would they respond when you came back?
- What made a difference to whether you would go missing or stayed in?
- Did you agree with carers ideas of what was ok/not ok for you to do? About what was and wasn't safe?

Conflict with carers

- What sorts of things would you disagree over?
- How did things get resolved?

- What did carers do that made things better? What did they do that made things worse?

Food

- What was the food/ meals like in your foster home?
- Could you get food when you wanted it?

Match

- Did you feel you fitted into the foster home? Why/why not?
- Did you feel your carers were a good match for you?

Outcomes

- Are there any good things that have happened as a result of being here?
- Are there any bad things that have happened as a result of being here?
- Have you changed in any negative/positive ways as a result of being here?

5. Advice for carers

From your own experience, what advice would you give to a carer who is going to be looking after a young person who is affected by sexual exploitation/trafficking/going missing?






Care history chart

Different
places
you've lived

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Your age 5 years ago  Your age now

Carer score card

		1 	2 	3 	4 	5 
1	How well are you getting on with your carer?					
2	How much does your carer respect and understand your cultural background?					
3	How understanding do you feel your carer is about the choices you make?					
4	How fair are the rules about what you can/cannot do in this foster placement?					
5	How much does your carer notice what is going on in your life?					
6	How supported do you feel by this carer?					
7	How much do you feel you can trust your carer?					
8	How much control do you feel you have over your own life?					
9	How safe do you feel in this placement?					
10	How happy are you in this foster placement?					